

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BOGOTA 03710 081844 Z

51

ACTION SY-10

INFO OCT-01 ARA-11 ADP-00 SS-15 OPR-02 SSO-00 CCO-00 RSR-01

RSC-01 /041 W

----- 006928

O R 081750 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7338

INFO USCINCSO

AMCONSUL CALI

AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 3710

LIMDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ASEC, CO

SUBJECT: SECRETARY'S VISIT: SECURITY ASSESSMENT

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

REF: STATE 085780

1. THE REVOLUTIONARY LEFT IN COLOMBIA IS SMALL AND FRAGMENTED AND OPERATES MAINLY IN RURAL AREAS, WHERE THE MILITARY FORCES HAVE MANAGED TO RESTRICT ACTIVITY TO SUCH ACTS AS KIDNAPPINGS AND ATTACKS ON ISOLATED POSTS AND POPULATION CENTERS. OF THE GUERRILLA ORGANIZATIONS STILL OPERATING, ONLY THE CUBAN- ORIENTED ELN (EJERCITO DE LIBERACION NACIONAL) HAS DEMONSTRATED A CAPABILITY OF ESTABLISHING AN URBAN SUPPORT MECHANISM. WHILE THIS MECHANISM HAS BEEN SUBJECT TO A SERIES OF DISRUPTIONS BY COLOMBIAN SECURITY FORCES, THE LATEST BEGINNING IN JUNE 1972, IT IS STILL IN EXISTENCE. ALTHOUGH ITS PURPOSE IS PRINCIPALLY TO SUPPORT RURAL- BASED GUERRILLAS, IT IS CAPABLE OF PLANNING AND EXECUTING OPERATIONS AGAINST URBAN TARGETS IN SUCH URBAN CENTERS AS BOGOTA, BUCARAMANGA, AND MEDELLIN. SUCH AN ATTACK WAS PERPETRATED BY THE ELN AGAINST GENERAL ALVARO VALENCIA TOVAR ON OCTOBER 8, 1971. THE NORMAL SECURITY PRECAUTIONS THAT SURROUND THE SECRETARY'S ACTIVITIES WHEN HE TRAVELS SHOULD BE SUFFICIENT DETERRENT FOR THE ELN NOT TO PLAN AN ATTACK AGAINST HIM.

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2. SEVERAL WORRISOME FACTORS EXIST WHICH COULD POSSIBLY PROVIDE THE BASIS FOR RIOTS AND DEMONSTRATIONS TO BE STAGED DURING THE SECRETARY' S VISIT. THE COST OF LIVING, WHICH ROSE SHARPLY OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS, SHOWED SIGNS OF AN EVEN MORE RAPID RATE OF INCREASE DURING THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1973, WITH THE MARCH INCREASE THE HIGHEST FOR ANY SINGLE MONTH IN 20 YEARS. ORGANIZED LABOR IS EXTREMELY CONCERNED AND ON MAY 1 (LABOR DAY) DEMANDED MORE EFFECTIVE PRICE CONTROLS AND ACROSS THE BOARD SALARY INCREASES. THE ADMINISTRATION IS WORRIED AND HAS STEPPED UP PROGRAMS TO PROVIDE FOOD TO POORER PEOPLE AT LOWER COSTS AND TO CONTROL PRICES, BUT WITH LITTLE SUCCESS TO DATE. SOME TEACHERS HAVE BEEN ON STRIKE OVER LONG DELAYS IN RECEIVING THEIR PAY AND OVER THE FAILURE OF THE GOVERNMENT TO IMPLEMENT A PAY RAISE PROMISED A YEAR AGO. DOCTORS AND NURSES ARE ON STRIKE AND THE CLAMOR FOR WAGE INCREASES TO OFFSET INCREASED COSTS GOES FAR BEYOND THE RANKS OF ORGANIZED LABOR.

3. THE UNIVERSITY SCENE IS QUIET FOR SEVERAL REASONS:

1. ACTIVIST LEADERS WERE EXPELLED LAST YEAR, 2.) GOVT THREAT TO DEAL HARSHLY WITH ANY FURTHER AGITATION, 3.) STUDENT DESIRE TO MAKE UP FOR TIME LOST LAST SEMESTER. NEVERTHELESS, STUDENTS ARE RESENTFUL AND A CATALYST OF SUCH MAJOR PROPORTIONS AS THE VISIT OF THE U. S. SECRETARY OF STATE COULD BRING ABOUT SERIOUS DEMONSTRATIONS.

4. A FRIEND OF AN EMB OFFICER WHO IS WORKING ON A STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS OPERATIONS, LAST WEEK INTERVIEWED A RADICAL ECONOMIST WHO IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE MAC (SMALL OPPOSITION GROUP). DURING THE COURSE OF THE INTERVIEW, IT BECAME CLEAR THAT THE MAC WAS IN THE PROCESS OF DISCUSSING WHAT KIND OF ACTION SHOULD BE TAKEN BY THE ORGANIZATION DURING SECRETARY ROGER' S VISIT. WHILE NO INFORMATION OTHER THAN THIS BRIEF FRAGMENT IS AVAILABLE, AND WHILE THE MAC IS PROBABLY TOO SMALL TO POSE MUCH OF A THREAT, IT DOES SEEM SIGNIFICANT THAT IT IS CONSIDERING SOME RESPONSE TO THE ROGER' S VISIT. OTHER, MORE DANGEROUS, GROUPS MAY ALSO BE INVOLVED IN PREPARING AN UGLY RECEPTION FOR THE SECRETARY, AND THE TEACHERS (ALONG WITH THEIR STUDENTS), COULD BECOME THEIR WILLING AGENTS IF THEIR DEMANDS (THE TEACHERS) HAVE NOT BEEN MET BY THE TIME OF THE VISIT. COLOMBIAN SECURITY FORCES SHOULD

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BE ABLE TO COPE WITH ANY FORESEEABLE SITUATION.

5. WITH THESE FACTORS AS BACKGROUND, WE CAN STATE THAT WHILE THERE IS A DEFINITE POSSIBILITY OF TROUBLE, WE DOUBT THERE WILL BE SERIOUS PROBLEMS. WE SHOULD KEEP IN MIND, HOWEVER, THAT THE NEWS THAT THE SECRETARY IS

COMING COULD BE USED BY RADICAL LEADERS TO TAP POPULAR AND STUDENT
FRUSTRATIONS AND SEND DEMONSTRATORS INTO THE STREETS DURING
THE SECRETARY'S VISIT.
SACCIO

NOTE: LIMDIS CAPTION ADDED PER S/ S- O - MR. FINNERTY.

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** LIMDIS
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Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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